

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 5, 2009

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary
The Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

One of the greatest responsibilities entrusted to the Congress is to ensure the security of the American people by providing for a strong national defense. With that responsibility in mind, we question the analytical basis for the decision by the Department of Defense to terminate the procurement of the F-22 Raptor and C-17 Globemaster III. Accordingly, to ensure the military equipment requirements of the nation are identified through a complete and cogent process, we respectfully request you recommend to the President that production of the F-22 and the C-17 continue until the final publication of the next Mobility Capability Study and the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review.

As you well know, in order to maximize the probability of success in military operations the development and execution of strategies must be comprehensive and well thought out. However, recent history has shown major threats to our national security can arise suddenly and in unexpected regions of the world. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and the events of September 11, 2001 prove this hypothesis. In addition, the difficulty in determining when and where a threat may arise is also compounded by the uncertainty as to what tactics and strategies our enemies may employ. Accordingly, we fully support and encourage your initiative to re-establish counterinsurgency warfare as a fundamental and widespread capability in our nation's Armed Forces.

However, just as our nation made a strategic error in permitting our ability to successfully prosecute counterinsurgency campaigns to wither and atrophy after the Vietnam War, we must not make a similar mistake and undermine two of the unique foundations of our nation's military strength: hegemony of the air and our unprecedented airlift capability. As you correctly stated this January, "our military must be prepared for a 'full spectrum' of operations, including the type of combat we're facing in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as large scale threats that we face from places like North Korea and Iran." Therefore, we are concerned the termination of production of the F-22 does not appear to be supported by any analytical study commissioned by the Department of Defense or the Air Force. In addition, though the decision to end production of the C-17 was supported by the 2005 Mobility Capability Study, this Study was criticized by the Government Accountability Office for underestimating our nation's future airlift requirements. We are also unaware of any risk assessment that has been performed

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based on the Combatant Commanders' requirements as to the decision to cease procurement of the F-22 and C-17.

Regarding the F-22, unclassified extracts of the Air Force's Sustaining Air Dominance Study state "180 F-22s was not enough" and the Department of Defense's TACAIR Optimization Study concluded the procurement of additional Raptors "was the best option." On April 16th, these conclusions were reinforced by the comments made by General Norton A. Schwartz *after* the F-22 procurement termination was announced. General Schwartz stated that "243 [Raptors] is the military requirement." This appears to conflict with earlier views expressed by the Department of Defense.

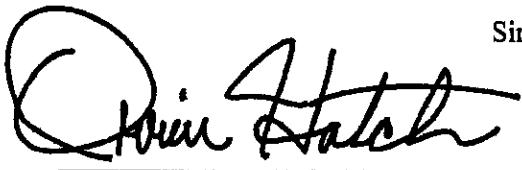
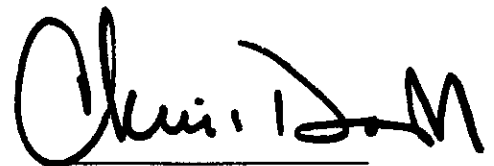
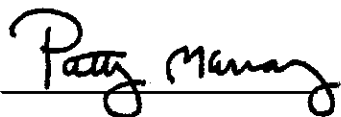
We have similar trepidations regarding the cessation of production of the C-17. In early 2002, even before the true scope and requirements of the Global War on Terrorism became known, the then commander of U.S. Transportation Command argued for the procurement of 222 Globemaster IIIs. Today, as the bulk of our deployed forces will be sent to the land-locked nation of Afghanistan, we are mindful of the critical need for airlift to supply our forces and our allies' operations in that nation. This point is emphasized by the recent Taliban attacks on our supply routes through the Kyber Pass region and NATO supply depots in Peshawar. Therefore, we are puzzled as to why C-17 production would be ended even though a new Mobility Capability Study was scheduled to be published next month.

Just as our recent military history points to the need to maintain a "full spectrum" military force to confront a myriad of very different threats, we are also mindful of a point recently made by Michael Korda in his book on the Battle of Britain. He observed that even though the two British Prime Ministers before Winston Churchill adopted a policy of appeasement, they also committed their government to develop and procure the three pieces of equipment: the Spitfire fighter, Hurricane fighter and radar, which were to ensure that nation's survival during the Battle of Britain.

Accordingly, we respectfully request you recommend to the President that production of the F-22 Raptor and the C-17 Globemaster III continue until the final publication of the next Mobility Capabilities Study and the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review can be reviewed and studied.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hatch", with a horizontal line underneath.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris. I. Don", with a horizontal line underneath.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patty Murray", with a horizontal line underneath.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob F. Bennett", with a horizontal line underneath.

Kay Bailey Hutchison

Olympia Snowe

Maria Cantwell

John Cornyn

David Vitter

John Mc. Cluney

Susan Collins

Sally Chaudhry

Frank Lautenberg

Richard W. Blumenthal